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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the origins of kindness in relation to the martial art known as Aikido. It also attempts to discover the underlying constitutional elements of Aikido's pedagogy of self learning, learning about others, and instructional practices that promote interpersonal relatedness. A teacher and four students of the Aikido Dojo were interviewed. Analysis revealed major structural constituents were associated with the pedagogy of Aikido. All of the Aikido practitioners described experiences where knowledge of self was mediated by an awareness of how invested they were in a given moment. Aikido offers one possible model for instruction that focuses on promotion of peace through the content it teaches. It demonstrates the value of a discipline in the process of self-discovery; it provides a cultural model for learning that is shaped by an interest in peaceful relations; and it provides a pedagogical model that is shaped by themes of blending, integration, wholeness, and unity. (Contains 18 references.) (Author/JDM)

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Exploring Human Kindness through the Pedagogy of Aikido

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Exploring Human Kindness through the Pedagogy of Aikido

Introduction

Kindness is a word we often use to describe an attribute of the self, or perhaps even an act done on the behalf of another. But what are the origins of kindness? From where does it spring? In the paper that follows, the origins of kindness will be an ever-present topic as we explore the underlying pedagogical structures of, believe it or not, …a martial art. In looking at this martial art we will examine a closed-loop ontology, of infinite possibility, that draws upon the power of reflecting upon one's own "kind-ness" as one possible window into the experience of the other. The martial art we will examine is Aikido.

Understanding Aikido. What is Aikido? It is difficult to conceptualize the totality that is Aikido. Not easily reduced by rational thought, Aikido may be understood best through its actual practice (Stevens, 1996). Though observed as a physical activity, Aikido is neither a sport nor can it be described completely as a type of physical exercise (Ueshiba, 1984). Founded upon essential tenets linked with eastern spirituality, it would also be incorrect to explain Aikido away as a form of religion or a cult (Shifflet, 1997 & 1999; O'Connor, 1993; Ueshiba, 1984). Shaped and defined by the dimensions of conflict found within human relations, Aikido is much more than a self-defense technique. In the words of one teacher: "Aikido is a martial art emphasizing the blending of energy between two persons (Costanzo, 1998, p.16)." Indeed, Aikido is a martial art that is done *with*, rather than *against* an aggressor.

Aikido literally means "the way to spiritual harmony"(Ueshiba, 1984). Often characterized as a "soft" martial art by outsiders, the practice of Aikido includes more than simply learning exotic, pain-inducing, self-defense techniques. More fundamentally, Aikido is based on a philosophy of peace and non-violence. Rather than teach its students to simply over-power would-be attackers, the philosophy that underlies Aikido encourages the student to examine his or her practice on the mat as metaphor for their participation in relationships beyond the dojo (O'Connor, 1993). Through the instrumental use of physical confrontation scenarios the student is provided with a wide range of opportunities for self-study within the context of interpersonal relations (Olson & Comfort, 1986). Ideally, students of Aikido develop the capacity to express

themselves, through their martial art, by learning to blend and redirect the force of the other in the interest of preserving peace and harmony.

Blending with the other in Aikido develops through self-knowledge. Aikido focuses on overcoming the attachments of the ego that trigger aggressive responses to confrontations. It is believed that such attachments not only precipitate aggression, but also obstruct our ability to reflect upon and express our true and universal nature (Olson & Comfort, 1986). In Aikido, this true nature, that it is believed we share with all other forms of consciousness is manifest as *"ki"* (Shifflett, 1998). Harmony through Aikido is derived from training that promotes an awareness of ki in one's self and as it is expressed through the other (Gleason, 1995; Drengson, 1992). In the words of the Zen Master Taisen Deshimaru: "Know thyself and thou shall know the universe (1982, p. 89).

Even the physical techniques of Aikido reflect an appreciation for harmony found in nature. Developed to imitate basic patterns of movement found in the cosmos, Aikido techniques are most often circular, rhythmic and free flowing. As Aikido is a martial art, force is an essential element of its application. However, force in Aikido is applied along long and curvilinear paths of continuity that conserve and redirect the threatening intent of an attacker's lunge, grab, punch or kick. Standing calm, as the center of this circle of violence, the Aikidoist unbalances the attacker through any number of techniques by applying only that amount of force necessary to neutralize conflict (Shifflett, 1999; Draeger, 1996; Ueshiba, 1984;).

Even though Aikido's philosophical tenets derive from such time-honored Eastern traditions as Confucianism, Zen Buddhism and Shintoism, Aikido itself is less than one hundred years old. Founded in the 1930's by Master Morihei Ueshiba, Aikido evolved from the deadly fighting arts of Jujutsu and Aikijutsu. Aikido, however, evolved through spiritual aims based upon the preservation of peace and the realization of universal harmony. According to his son Kisshomaru Ueshiba (1984)...

> His goal was...The unification of the fundamental creative principle, ki permeating the universe, and the individual ki, inseparable from breath-power, of each person. Through constant training of mind and body, the individual ki harmonizes with the universal ki, and this unity appears in the dynamic, flowing

> movement of ki-power that is free and fluid, indestructible and invincible. This is the essence of the Japanese martial arts embodied in Aikido (pg. 15).

Historically, Asian martial arts have been defined as military, emancipatory and/or religious practices (Columbus & Rice, 1998). In the Japanese tradition, martial arts are understood categorically as either bujutsu or budo. *Bu* meaning martial and *jutsu* meaning art, *bu-jutsu* include all martial disciplines or combative styles that aspire to perfection in skill or technique for the sake of overcoming death in combat. *Bu-do* (Martial way) include those martial practices that lead toward personal growth or even self-transcendence by incorporating the additional dimension of spirituality (Draeger, 1973). As an example, Aiki-jutsu limits itself to the acquisition and perfection of skills necessary for dealing with physical assault. In contrast, Aiki-do focuses on learning the necessary skills and dispositions to preserve harmony in our relations, diffuse conflict and transcend the ego. This should not suggest to the reader that budo, including Aikido, are any less effective in dealing with a threatening situation than bujutsu. In fact, the physical skills associated with either bujutsu or budo disciplines may be similar, or in some instances, exactly the same. What is different, however, is the meaning that is attached to each type of practice and how such meaning extends through technique toward the desired end in the practitioner's daily life.

To begin the study of a budo form, such as Aikido, the prospective student must first seek out and be accepted by a true master teacher. There is no substitute for studying under a budo master. More than a technical expert, the master is said to be the very embodiment of that which he teaches. His teachings are a direct articulation of budo consciousness; anything else, by anyone else, would at best be a replication of inferior quality. Once accepted by the teacher, the student must freely submit to the process of *sei shin tanren*, or "spiritual forging" (Draeger, 1996). Sei shin tanren traditionally required the student to embark on a grueling and prolonged apprenticeship designed to ultimately transmit budo form and consciousness from the teacher's mind to the student's mind and from the teacher's heart to the student's heart. This mind-to-mind and heart-to-heart transmission is identified in traditional texts as *isshin den shin*(Draeger, 1997 & 1996; Deshimaru, 1982).

Infused with Zen Buddhist philosophy, the instructional method of the budo master is grounded in an intuitive epistemology rather than a rational one (Draeger, 1973). Relying upon enigmatic and suggestive clues rather than ideas or concepts to express itself, intuitive insight becomes significant in the long-term learning of the student. The student's capacity for intuitive understanding is developed through strenuous technical exercises aimed at the neutralization and diminished influence of the ego. Based on the particular budo form that is studied, these exercises focus on the perfection of specific physical skills or techniques. By intensely focusing on physical technique, the student's personal sense of "I" dissolves, allowing technical mastery to blossom and the student's waking state of consciousness to expand and absorb the insights shared through the master's instruction (Canic, 1986).

To study the pedagogy of Aikido in a manner that is faithful to the experience of both the teacher and the student, special epistemological and methodological measures must be considered. For such phenomena, empiricism proves insufficient as an epistemology and experimentalism a poor framework for the study of teaching and learning in this martial art. To address these concerns this study employed a field immersion experience within a phenomenological-hermeneutic framework of inquiry.

Phenomenological Inquiry. Phenomenological research focuses on recollecting an original lived experience and establishing a renewed contact with the meaning associated with the experience. Such recollections and reconnections occur through personal descriptions of a given phenomenon. Descriptions may be obtained through a variety of data that include transcriptions of audiotaped interviews, written descriptions, videotaped performances, etc (Van Manen, 1990).

Analysis in phenomenological inquiry includes continuous reflection by the researcher on descriptions provided by respondents. Care, However, must be taken to "bracket," in an equally continuous manner, all presuppositions held by the researcher about the phenomenon as the inquiry unfolds. Balancing reflection against assumption, analysis eventually yields the essential constituents of the respondent's experience (Van Manen, 1990; Giorgi, 1985).

While phenomenological research chiefly focuses on description, it unavoidably unfolds as an interpretive enterprise. Because the recollection of a lived experience is soaked through

with, and made possible by, language, such experience forms the text of our life. However, as text, abstracted from immediate, original and primitive contact with the world, such recollected experiences, though personally meaningful, unfold as interpretations. Because of this, phenomenological inquiry is necessarily the interpretation of text or hermeneutics (Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological inquiry, however, assumes that beneath the text of our lives lies an underlying, invariant order of experience. Therefore, it becomes the goal of phenomenological inquiry to seek out invariant constituents that contribute to the more general constitutional structure of the experience. Toward this end, descriptions of commonly shared experiences are collected from a group of people and are then subsequently "mined" for invariant constituents or meaning units (Giorgi, 1985).

The present study attempts to discover the underlying constitutional elements of Aikido's pedagogy. Specific pedagogical dimensions addressed in this paper included learning about one's self, learning about the other, and instructional practices that promote interpersonal relatedness.

Method

Dojo Immersion Experience. Phenomenological inquiry attempts to explore experience as it is lived rather than as it is conceptualized. In this study, the investigator collected interview data during a one-month period of residence at an Aikido dojo. Following the schedule of the uchideshi, or live-in apprentice, the investigator was immersed in a 24 hour-a-day regimen of intense physical training in Aikido and equally intense training in meditation. This regimen of budo training was experienced under the care of an internationally–recognized Aikido teacher and confirmed Zen Master.

Provisions were made, on a daily basis for the investigator to produce, organize and reflect upon field notes related to his lived experience, conversations held with others, and general impressions of dojo life.

Bracketing of Presuppositions. Phenomenological inquiry requires continuous recognition of assumptions or presuppositions held by the investigator. Once identified by the investigator, presuppositions are then "bracketed" or put aside to avoid possible contamination of

the data during the collection and analysis phases of the study. In this study, the presuppositions and assumptions of the investigator were identified prior to the immersion experience in the Dojo.

The investigator, prior to his immersion in Dojo life, identified three levels of presuppositions about the Aikido experience. At the most superficial level the investigator noted his presuppositions about the martial arts experience in popular American culture prior to his actual participation in martial arts activities. On a more informed level, the investigator, following three months of participation in Shorin-ryu Karate, noted his assumptions about martial arts derived from direct experience in a Karate Dojo. On the most informed level, the investigator, following nine months of intellectual study specific to Aikido, noted his presuppositions and expectations of Dojo life and Aikido instruction.

Recruitment of Respondents. Five respondents from the same dojo were selected for this study. These respondents included the principle teacher of Aikido at the dojo (Shihan) and four of his students. The Shihan identified a pool of qualified and available students. Of this pool (N=7), four students were asked, by the investigator, to participate in this study. Equal numbers of male and female students agreed to participate. The criteria for each student's admission to this study included a) a recommendation for participation in the study by their teacher, b) extensive experience as a student of Aikido (5 years + with at least a rank of second degree black belt) and c) significant experience as an instructor of Aikido.

Data Collection. The interviews were tape recorded and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Respondents were asked to describe concrete experiences that detailed aspects of Aikido's pedagogy. Each interview included three separate questions focused on a different dimension associated with the tenets of Aikido. These questions focused on experiences that a) dealt with self-awareness, b) led to an expanded awareness of "the other" and c) exemplified teaching another to expand their interpersonal awareness through their practice of Aikido.

The interview process was semi-structured in its format. Respondents were provided a list of the three interview questions in advance and were instructed to recollect the concrete features of an experience that they would use as an exemplar to elaborate on each dimension of their Aikido experience. The responsibilities of the investigator were limited to active listening

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and redirection. Redirection was only necessary in instances when the respondent's response strayed from the concrete description of the experience in question.

Data Analysis. Reflecting the philosophical tenets of Aikido, the structure and order of the interview questions presupposed specific global dimensions associated with Aikido's pedagogy. These dimensions included: a) gaining self-awareness through Aikido, b) gaining interpersonal awareness through Aikido and c) teaching others to become interpersonally aware through Aikido. Each of these dimensions served as apriori categories for the organization of data preceding their analyses.

Meaning Units. All transcribed interviews were read thoroughly to gain an appreciation for the respondents' description of the phenomenon in question. The text of each interview was then reduced to the essential meaning units supporting the structure of each respondent's description (Giorgi, 1985; Van Manen, 1990). Meaning units were often recorded in the respondent's own words, but in some instances meaning units were constructed through the use of paraphrase to more accurately reflect the general meaning embedded in the transcribed response. Methodically, all meaning units were recorded as annotations on transcripts of the taped interviews.

Meaning units were then compared, across respondents, within each of the global dimensions associated with Aikido's pedagogy. Invariant constituents of Aikido's pedagogy were then identified when meaning units were found that reflect a common underlying structure to all respondents' experiences associated with either the teaching or learning of Aikido. Emergent constituents were identified in instances where common themes emerged but lacked universal agreement.

Member-Checking. Member checking was employed as a measure of trustworthiness in this study. Once the data were analyzed, meaning units and their initial interpretations were shared with the respondents. This procedure was conducted as a dialogical means of gaining both clarity and verification of the study's interpretive results.

Peer Debriefing. In addition to member checking, peer debriefing was used in the interest of preserving trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer researcher reviewed

annotated transcripts of taped interviews and the researcher's interpretations to corroborate the authenticity of this study's findings.

Results

The Aikido practitioners interviewed in this study described a wide range of personal experiences associated with their participation in Aikido. It becomes important to understand that Aikido, unlike western exercise regimes or sport, cannot be discretely categorized or understood using a behavioral paradigm. For many, the practice of Aikido becomes the practice of their life. For this reason, experiences selected by the respondents varied greatly and may in some instances seem to take the reader beyond the boundaries of the mat and into various aspects of the respondent's life. Such is the nature of the advanced student's participation in Aikido.

The analysis revealed a number of major structural constituents associated with the pedagogy of Aikido. Of these, only three found agreement across all five respondents, and thus may be considered invariant. There were additional themes that emerged from the analysis that did not find agreement across all of the respondents. These will not be addressed in this report because of considerations for time and space. The following are the three identified invariant constituents associated with the underlying structure of Aikido's pedagogy:

1.) Commitment to the moment reflects a critical milestone in self-awareness (invariant).

2.) An Aikido "lens" renders the other transparent (invariant).

3.) The focus of learning must be on "mindful doing" (invariant).

Each of the above invariant constituents will be defined and illustrated through the use of interview excerpts. All names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Learning about the self through Aikido: Commitment to the moment reflects a critical milestone in self-awareness. When asked about experiences leading to self-knowledge, the respondents provided varying accounts of critical learning incidences. All accounts included meaning units that identified attentiveness to the moment as a common concern when framing and evaluating the practitioner's sense of self. Moreover, experiences associated with the respondent's

awareness of whether or not they were fully engaged in the moment seemed to provide a reflective developmental milestone for the appraisal of an evolving sense of self.

Chris, the Aikido practitioner with the least experience and rank, reflected on how her attention to technical aspects of her practice provided a personal metaphor for her general conduct in life. Chris reflected:

> ...a realization that I had early in my training was that in Aikido there's the attack, the initial response, the technique and the finish with either a pin or a throw. In the case of the pin, I found that I wasn't very good at pinning. No matter what we did, I didn't care about it. It wasn't important to me. I just did it because we were supposed to do it. In time, I became aware that this reflected the way I was in (other aspects of) my life. I was really good at starting things, but soon enough I would become bored with mundane things like practice, . . . I didn't have that full intensity or that full focus all the way through things I set out to do.

And later Chris recounted

> ...I didn't really know how to fix my life, but on the mat I said, "well if I can start really concentrating on my pins, if I can just do the whole thing from start to finish, then maybe that'll help me in my outside life.

For Lee, also, his awareness that he lacked attentiveness in his practice led to a meaningful personal realization. In Lee's case, personal censure by his teacher for behaving in a distracted manner led to a re-evaluation of his relationship with Aikido. Reflecting upon his level of sincerity in the moment, Lee articulates the difference between going through the motions of self-conscious role-playing and practice in Aikido as an authentic form of personal expression.

> I was doing randori (defending against multiple attackers) against two guys (for the purpose of demonstration). ...And they got me. ...And I kinda had a smile on my face. I was like "Oh God, I can't believe they got me!" I felt embarrassed, ..that kinda thing. So Sensei stopped the whole thing and said "What are you doing?!! Then, when I came downstairs...he goes, "Lee, what the hell are you doing?!" ...He just ripped into me for letting that (the smile) happen. He's like, "I don't want to see you laughing like that on the mat again!" This put a light on how I approached things. –Not just the Aikido, but how I approached my life. I just didn't make it that important. Had it (the randori) been my Shodan test, that (incident) would have never happened because I would have been more sincere; ...I would have given it my full attention. I guess I wasn't looking at that situation as one that was real.

In the cases of Lisa and Dan, two of the more advanced students, focused attention in the moment, while participating in Aikido, led to revelations about the self. In Dan's case, this revelation occurred during his 4th degree Blackbelt test. Having contracted tuberculosis some

years before while studying Buddhism in Asia, Dan has been a longtime sufferer of respiratory ailments and chronic fatigue. Reflecting on his test, a multi-hour ordeal of warding-off armed and unarmed attackers, Dan recalled subtle moments of clarity while coping with the debilitating affects of both bronchitis and pneumonia as well the more immediate concern of warding-off attackers.

> At the time I had pneumonia. Sensei asked me if I wanted to take the test and granted me permission to take it. I think he knew my condition was not great, everyone knew I was ill, probably no one really knew what was going to happen because that test is a fairly severe test. During that test I literally thought I was going to die. I didn't think I was going to make it out of that test; about halfway through the test I just hit bottom. I just couldn't breathe. I had both bronchitis and pneumonia at the time and I simply had no energy. –and then I reached a point where all of that just fell away. My concern for my body fell away. It (my body) was still there, and my illness was still there, but my attachment to these things fell away. And I found myself just doing what I needed to do. Just going forward, very calmly, very peacefully, in a resigned but energetic way. I think there was a brief moment when I would say that I transcended my condition so I was able to do what I needed to do. For me that was a really important experience because illness had always been something I had fought…it (illness) had caused me to change plans and caused me to give things up I didn't want to give up. And it was also something that I was definitely afraid of….Aikido at that moment was a vehicle which allowed me to break through that sort of barrier. That's what sticks out in my mind. I still face problems with my illness, but I don't think I view it (illness) in quite the same way and I credit that experience for that change.

Similarly, Lisa shared an experience where Aikido's requirements of her self created a critical moment of personal discovery. Lisa described this moment as she recalled a particularly difficult decision she had to make about the long-term care of her mother.

> About eleven years ago,…I'd been studying (Aikido) for about a year or so, so I was pretty new to Aikido. My mom, at the time was very, very sick and I had to make a decision to put her into a nursing home. I came to the dojo (one day during that time) and I was just completely destroyed. I was getting dressed and just crying. The friend of mine who brought me to Aikido in the first place happened to be there because she was teaching the class that night. She said, "Ya know, we have about ten minutes before class begins, why don't you get dressed and I'll throw you around." --And she did. So for ten minutes, all she did was throw me around and it was the best thing she could have done for me because I was so trapped in the pain of that decision and the sorrow of it. Just to be in Aikido and just to be strong, that was a deep learning moment for me in terms of um, my problems are still gonna be my problems when I walk out of the dojo, but for now, this is what is in front of me. This is what I have to do and this is what I can do. And so that situation in terms of my own self-learning was very important to me.

In further reflection, Lisa added:

> … If you're gonna be thrown around and not get hurt, then you really have to pay attention. That was a real defining moment for me in terms of, well, it was a kind of break-through moment because… if I'm doing this one particular thing, then let me do this thing with my full attention. When I leave the dojo I will have to do other kinds of things and I can do those things (also) with my full attention also.

Because the ability to focus in the moment is so critical to the practice of Aikido, the Sensei of the dojo scrutinizes even the most routine behavior of his students to determine their rate of progress as they develop. According to the Shihan (master teacher):

> Aikido requires a whole lifetime of learning… so we often say, "Aikido for daily life." Aikido in daily life includes an aspect of our tradition called *shugyo*. Shugyo is training through Aikido that is physically demanding. This principal extends to all twenty-four hours of (our) entire life…. I am the one teaching Aikido. But I also use cooking to teach Aikido. Why do I use cooking (in my teaching)? You see, this (cooking) is my tool for observing how people (my students) work together. I want to see how they move. I want to see how they clean. I want to see how precisely, quickly, efficiently they move with intention….with a precise action; moment by moment.

To summarize, all of the Aikido practitioners described experiences where knowledge of the self was in some way mediated by their awareness of how invested they were in a given moment (while attending to a given task). Clearly, self-knowledge through Aikido was constructed differently for each of the respondents. In one case, reflections on technique mediated self awareness, in another, the anger of the teacher stimulated critical concern for the student's level of sincerity in his life and his relations; and for still others, personal crises led to revelations about the fundamental nature of the self. Even though each of these critical learning experiences varied widely in their content, commitment in the moment to the task at hand was identified as an invariant theme contributing to the underlying structure of learning experiences leading toward self knowledge in Aikido.

Learning about the other through Aikido: An Aikido "lens" renders the other transparent. The second invariant theme found within the interview data suggests that knowledge of the other is constructed through the use of an Aikido "lens." Operating as an analytical framework for the evaluation of the other, this lens both frames and interprets the behaviors, dispositions and motives of the other. The identification of this lens was based on the common language structures used by

the respondents to describe the other when asked to elaborate on an experience that led to an increased awareness of the other. This lens serves to appreciate the other as possessing at least two dimensions associated with their personal character; a public persona that is regarded as legitimate but superficial and an obscured or hidden experience of a self that residing deep within, or perhaps even beneath, the other's personality construct. Moreover, through the shared practice of Aikido, these deep aspects of the other's self can become known. According to the respondents, Aikido leads to a certain transparency of the other. According to Lee,

> "…it (Aikido) is an area that really gives you a window into other people."

And likewise for Dan,

> "…you can't hide anything from yourself or from the instructor on that mat."

In still another example Chris reflected…

> …since my first day on the mat it was so obvious that the way a person is on the mat is who they are. They can't hide. They can't put it beneath. They can't pretend to be something they aren't because who they are comes out on the mat. …it's really obvious in Aikido. It strips away everything. It leaves you nothing to hide behind. It brings it up face to face. I mean maybe you can turn a blind eye to it, but it's really there at least for other people to see.

And similarly, Lisa stated:

> I think what Aikido teaches, if you're paying attention, is that everybody is going to show who they are on the mat. I think that is very, very clear. Everything comes out on the mat; your fears, your insecurities, your gifts; everything comes out on the mat.

Not surprisingly, the Shihan shared very similar ideas about seeing "through" his students. In his own words,

> Teachers have to see what we call (their student's) reserve. This person (referring to the student), what is their state of mind? What is their emotion? What is their knowledge? What is their background culture? What is their education? In other words we're seeing their whole situation. Once you see (them; their situation), then you provide correct instruction.

While there seems to be a commonly held notion that the practice of Aikido renders the opaque outer boundaries of the other's self, transparent, Aikido as an analytical framework for the evaluation of the other, seemed to be constructed differently for each of the respondents. For

instance, while Greg's descriptions were empathetic, his recollections still maintained a comfortable distance from the experience of the other. For example:

> ...their true nature comes through. Because it's a very intimate practice, I always try to remember how someone coming into it will deal with...the idea of someone touching them (For instance), invading their personal space, grabbing onto them, ya know? Men as well as women...women sometimes have a hard time because of a man grabbing their arm...this (physical contact) gives you a window into people.

Chris, on the other hand, attempted to "borrow" her teacher's analytic framework to establish categories of, and make inferences about, the other. It is important to note, however, that in Chris's case, she provides justification for her "lens" by offering anecdotal information about her own experience of self discovery through her relationship with her teacher. Accordingly, she reflected:

> I try to think like my teacher to see how somebody is and ya know as I build up my experience with people, I can almost make a prediction as to how they're going to progress, how they're going to train or what they need to work on most. You know, what's their big obstacle? What one theme, if there is one theme, can I help them break through so they can fix a lot of stuff? You know, there's got to be some (underlying problems), right? I've learned through my own experience with Sensei poking holes in me, that there is something in there.

For Dan and Lisa, the more advanced students with the greatest amount of teaching experience, knowledge of the other evolves more directly from their own self knowledge. From Lisa,

> ...After being on the mat for twelve years, both as a student and as a teacher, I certainly know where my fears are and I know where all of that stuff is inside myself and it has helped me as a teacher.

And similarly, Dan reflected...

> In Aikido when we talk about all this, we're talking about the self, when we talk about the self, we're talking about others because so much of what we do is done in a relationship. ...I see the limitations that people have and start to gain a sense of where those limitations come from. ...I think this has led me to a more deepened sense of compassion for people...I start to see the same patterns of behavior and limitation and fear in other people that I saw in myself. I guess I'm saying that training and teaching for me became a bridge to acknowledge the reality of other people's lives or seeing that we have the same nature. We have the same habits; we have the same experience; we have the same problems; we're all going through the same crap.

In summary, each of the respondents was able to provide a vivid recollection of an experience where the practice of Aikido provided them with insight into the character of another.

Common to all accounts was language describing the other as being "transparent." In one instance this transparency was appreciated through observations of another's physical encounters on the mat. For other respondents, the other's transparency was linked to self-awareness. Interestingly, the respondent's comments suggest that the evaluative construct associated with the transparent other can be mediated from either external points of reference (another's experience, the teacher's perspective) or internalized experience (prior experience with fear, pain, etc.). Moreover, it should also be noted that the more experienced students, Lisa and Ben, were the most self-directed in their reflections of the other's transparency.

Teaching students to expand their consciousness to include the other: The focus of learning must be on "mindful doing." A third invariant theme emerging from the data suggests that instruction promoting interpersonal awareness, through Aikido, be fundamentally shaped by an emphasis on movement that requires mindfulness in the moment. As Dan put it, this level of awareness begins with the basic expectations that the teacher has for the student and the student has for his or her self.

> ...the focus has to be when they come in that they are fully here, when they come in, their mind, their posture, their energy are fully committed to what they're doing at that moment.

This focus, however, cannot be myopic. Dan continued,

> The student's awareness of this one thousand-or-so square foot area must be fully on, fully activated. That in alone is revolutionary (in learning) because most people do not have that quality in their lives.

Methodologically, mindful movements begin with messages conveyed by the teacher. For instance, Lisa recognized the pedagogical value of her own movement when communicating lessons to her students about making connections with others.

> Sometimes at the end of class I like to say stuff about Aikido. I think, however, if anybody's getting a lesson, it's based more on the example I try to provide rather than what I say. I'm always trying to find clarity of expression through my Aikido.

Largely, however, she also recognized that such realizations evolve experientially and are not so easily either taught or learned as a skill.

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> They (my students) have to do it. …I think there has to be about 90% doing and maybe 10% talking about it. I want people to understand that this (Aikido) isn't just a technique. I don't think that's really the whole thing. …What feels true to me is that we open ourselves up and we let it (Aikido) happen through us. It's kind of like breathing…it's kind of like jazz.

Similarly, Lee also reflected on the nature of what he teaches and extends the metaphor:

> There's a definite body-mind learning that goes on. So, when you get more of this, you know your body just does something and your attention can diffuse a little more. It doesn't have to focus on the hand. You just know, like in any other art, like a guitar player, …you know? …you can learn the song because you can focus on the song and your hand goes to where the chords should be. So your focus diffuses and you trust in your hand and to some degree you also trust your body, …that kind of thing.

His teacher corroborated Lee's thoughts. According to the Shihan, as the student learns Aikido, he may begin to develop a type of body-emotion or body-wisdom recognized in Japanese metaphysics as "*Kan*." Kan is not only recognized as an epistemology, or way of knowing, but also represents an experience associated with freedom, ego transcendence, and the state of no attachment.

According to Chris, the first step in teaching the student to be fully present in his or her movement is to simply stimulate their attentiveness to the other with instructional cues that cannot be ignored. Chris recounted,

> I just begin by telling the student not to focus on the attacking hand only. Like we're doing a cross-hand grab and they're looking at their attacker's hand waiting for it to come in and as a result they're missing everything else that's going-on around them. So if I notice this I just whack them with my other hand or do something to make them realize that they are fixating. So sometimes all I have to say is "hey, there's somebody on the other end of that technique, you know? There's a whole person."

Dan supported this by pointing-out the instrumental value of expecting the unexpected in the cultivation of interpersonal awareness through martial arts training.

> … there is something about being constantly attacked that will tend to make you a little sharper. There is something in the process of working with other people's bodies…that develops a sensitivity to other people's physical forms and personal space and feelings and so on.

But Dan continued to point-out that such lessons are designed to create penetrating self-reflection for the learner. In his words,

> ... Any training that constantly throws you back on yourself in a way that this training does can only create a greater compassion and openness to other people. If you are constantly thrown back on yourself, at some point there is a transcendence of the self.

To summarize, mindful movement, according to the respondents, is an essential element in Aikido instruction that promotes interpersonal awareness between the student and the other. According to the respondents such mindfulness evolves from expectations shared by both the teacher and his/her student, sound methodology that emphasizes experiential learning in the present that include the other, and lessons that require the learner's absolute full attention. It is important to note, however, that such lessons not be designed to absorb and narrow the learner's focused attention, but rather lead toward expanded awareness.

Discussion

This study identified three invariant themes supporting the underlying structure of Aikido's pedagogy. A discussion of each theme follows:

Commitment to the moment reflects a critical milestone in self-awareness. Aikido, as a form of modern budo, incorporates physically demanding challenges, mental discipline and spiritual training in its educational approach. Ultimately, the goal of Aikido as budo is to fully integrate the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of the human experience as a single unified form of expression. Through the synergy of these three dimensions of the human experience, harmony is brought into consciousness and thus finds application in the social relations of a peace-seeking society (Ueshiba, 1984).

As Budo, Aikido incorporates much from the philosophical and spiritual traditions of Taoism, Neo-Confucianism, Shintoism and Zen Buddhism (Gleason, 1995). Not the least of which are specific notions of self, self-awareness and self-transcendence. Drawing upon the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism and Taoism, Budo, such as Aikido evolve from a set of beliefs that assert that perfection of the self cannot occur without also perfecting the selves of others

(Wang, 1999). Add to this system of beliefs an appreciation for swift and decisive justice (rooted in Shintoism), as well as spiritual cleansing through rigorous physical and mental challenges (Zen Buddhism), and we begin to gain some understanding for the philosophy and instructional principles that shape Aikido as a practice leading toward self-development (Draeger, 1997).

Questions about the development of their self-awareness, through Aikido, brought to mind a number of experiences for the respondents in this study. In each instance, however, the common underlying element proved to be the individual's level of commitment to the moment during their practice. Clearly, reflections on these experiences meant different things to each of the respondents. In some instances, awareness of a lack of commitment in the moment reflected a developmental deficiency in their practice, in their self and perhaps, even in more general aspects of their lives. In these accounts we find examples of self-consciousness; but specific to these accounts, the self exists as an object for the other (In both cases, the other is the teacher. In one example the teacher is present; in the other, the teacher is an internalized other). Nevertheless, the awareness of what was lacking in the moment resulted in an expanded consciousness of the self. -- Even if it was through another's perspective.

For the others, awareness of commitment in the moment coincided with an experience of self-transcendence and a subsequent re-evaluation of what it means to have a personal identity. In these recollections, we see references to complete immersion within the moment. Because of this immersion, awareness was both distilled and diffused as it overflowed the limits of the respondents' personal identity. Such experiences, especially where movement is concerned, have corollaries in Western thought. For Abraham Maslow (1978), such accounts were described as "peak experiences;" for Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1993), they were categorized as states of "flow."

Peak or flow movement experiences generally coincide with the selection of activities that promote personal feelings of harmony and wellness. Because such activities are generally thought to be enjoyable and thus attract a high degree of attention, they have the capacity to promote deep and focused concentration on the task at hand. Once focused, individuals report a subtle awareness that their subjectivity begins to converge with the activity they enjoy so much. In activities not so different from Aikido, the mover is no more able to possess the movement than

the movement is able to possess the mover. In essence, the mover becomes one with the movement. Though there is an experience of being in control, it is unlike the grasping, clutching reflex of the ego. Rather, control is born from a deeply felt sense of being nested, and thus being safe, within the total experience. In some ways these accounts seem to recollect a primal oceanic state of innocence that mollifies the harsh realities of being a separate self (Maslow, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988).

These type of integrative movement experiences become pivotal because they provide movers with the realization that their awareness can indeed overflow the boundaries of their experience as a self. In other words, one becomes aware that one's self is only a part of that which is one's total "kindness." Perhaps catching only a glimpse of their fundamental nature, or perhaps catching much more, some suggest that through such experiences they have apprehended certain irreducible truths about the common ground of all existence or of an essential reality. Descriptions of these truths include the experience of wholeness, unity, integration, and interconnectedness (Maslow, 1978 pg. 92).

An Aikido "lens" renders the other transparent. Aikido is a martial system (way) based on philosophical tenets promoting harmony rather than conflict (Ueshiba, 1984). In it's most advanced level of application, Aikido technique is applied without thought of defeating an opponent or winning a contest. In fact, proper application of Aikido technique is also believed to remove all aggressive thoughts from mind of the antagonist. At the root of these practices lies a sensitivity or compassion for the other (Olson & Comfort, 1986). This is a particularly interesting aspect of Aikido because the other enters the relationship with the intent to cause harm and possible kill. Because of this unique relational aspect of Aikido, awareness of the other emerges as a fundamental dimension of its pedagogy.

When asked to describe specific Aikido experiences that expanded their awareness of others, all of the respondents used language describing the other as being "transparent" (e.g., You cannot hide who you really are when you step onto the mat). Because there was such a high degree of consistency in the language used by the respondents, it seems likely that the transparency of the

other occurs, at least in part, through the use of a common cultural lens providing an analytical framework for the evaluation of others.

This Aikido "lens" both frames and interprets the other. Two of the more interesting questions that arise about this lens are: a) to what degree is the other's transparency a presumption based purely on what has been normalized within the dojo and b) to what degree has insight into the other's experience of self evolved through the practitioner's personal, private history of experiences in Aikido? Clearly examples of both orientations could be identified in the data and most probably represent different levels of reflective consciousness along a developmental continuum.

Interestingly, "seeing" into the "heart" of the aggressor has historical precedent in early bujutsu. Referred to as *kan-ken futatsu no koto*, this special quality exhibited by master warriors was a subliminal sense that included the sight of both the eyes and the mind in combination. For the warrior, the sight of the eyes alone was regarded as weak and susceptible to illusion; the sight of the intuitive mind (*kan*), on the other hand, was regarded as being infinitely more reliable. By using both the sight of the eyes and the insight of the intuitive mind, the master warrior was seemingly prepared for an attack, at all times, from all directions. In Budo, *kan-ken futatsu no koto* describes a mode of seeing (knowing) into the inner self of the antagonist; into one's own self (Draeger, 1997).

Regardless of whether the respondents appropriated a legitimized set of values for the evaluation of the other or drew upon an expanded level of consciousness that included the other, this commonly held construction of the other, as being transparent, coupled with a metaphysical framework based upon interconnections found in the cosmos, suggests that not only is there more to the other than meets the eye, but what lies beneath is valued and fundamentally worth appreciating.

The focus of learning must be on "mindful doing." When asked to describe an experience that would illustrate how they taught students to include others in their awareness, all of the respondents described experiences where mindful action was essential. Mindful action is not the same as calculated deliberate attempts by the brain to control parts of the body. Instead, mindful

action suggests that the individual is completely invested (mind, body and spirit) in the task at hand and action becomes increasingly comparable to a form of expression.

A classic example of this type of expression in the martial arts comes in the form of the ki-ai. Kiai are loud ear-splitting vocalizations made naturally by martial artists during their counterattacks. While yells are often heard in dodges that weakly imitate true kiai, kiai are more than yells for effect. Rather, the kiai is anchored in the moment as an intense form of expression that wells up and extends outward from the energy reserves (Ki) deep within the martial artist (Deshimaru, 1982). One source notes that it was once believed that true kiai could bring down a bird in mid-flight (Gleason, 1995). For those who have had the opportunity to hear an authentic kiai, the difference is distinctive.

What creates this difference is the point from which each shout originates. These points of origin are not so much anatomical as they are existential. While the pseudo-kiai is projected from the self-conscious motives of the ego, the uninhibited ear-ringing kiai is projected outward from a deeper, more primal source within the individual (Draeger, 1996; Deshimaru, 1982).

To learn to project the kiai, as with all of the other dimensions of Aikido's martial practice, the student must be placed in learning situations that require so much psychic energy that there is simply no opportunity for self-reflection. Early on, this type of learning requires the repeated execution of a wide range of technical skills in a highly structured environment (Draeger, 1996; Canic, 1986). Later, the student may be challenged to perform complex kata with weapons, or face multiple attackers to demonstrate his or her technical proficiency to the teacher. Because such encounters require seemingly split-second reactive abilities, there is little if any time for cognitive decision-making. All that the student can do is trust their ability to express ki.

As pointed-out by the Shihan, *kan* evolves from such mindful action. Kan is an epistemology that evolves from the practice of budo. Essentially, through hours of practice that stretch into years of commitment, budo training, such as that found in Aikido begins to seamlessly integrate the intentions of the mind with the actions of the body. Once fully integrated, this mind-body meld activates the intuitive, more inclusive level of consciousness recognized as kan.

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Why study the pedagogy of Aikido?...Some closing thoughts. Aikido provides one possible model for instruction that focuses on the promotion of peace through the content it teaches. There are, of course, many other martial arts that focus purely on self-defense technique as an end in itself. Aikido, however, is different. Recognizing that conflict begins with the attachments of the ego, teachers of Aikido use technique as a means of teaching their students how to let go of such attachments and appreciate the common humanity they share with others. On a fundamental level, in a world filled with much conflict, this focus on addressing one's own contribution to needless violence seems a good place to begin on a path committed toward change.

Aikido also demonstrates the value of a discipline in the process of self-discovery. Too often, discipline is associated with constraint rather than growth or even liberation. Under the pressures of such discipline, personal identity simply evolves as a more structured, more defined, more enduring version of its former self. The budo nature of Aikido, on the other hand, drives a discipline-based pedagogy that developmentally softens, and ultimately dissolves one's ego-centric sense of self. As the respondents have shared, personal growth through the practice of Aikido is often tied to an awareness of being present in the moment. At the very least, this insight seems to suggest that focused attention and deliberate action are two of the cornerstones of Aikido practice. In keeping with the traditions that support this practice, such appreciation for the present suggests a meditative quality to the practitioner's actions; centered, aware and accepting.

Furthermore, the Aikido dojo provides a cultural model for learning shaped by an interest in peaceful relations. One of insights gained in this study, with regard to this particular dojo, was that a shared value-laden framework was employed by the practitioners when interpreting and evaluating the other's intentions. While it is unclear whether this framework evolves from mimicry, pragmatic cynicism or deep personal introspection, it does suggest that the culture of Aikido values the awareness of another's individual potential and a holds open a space where everybody deserves a second chance to improve themselves.

Finally, Aikido provides a pedagogical model that is shaped by themes of blending, integration, wholeness and unity. This is most apparent in the relationship between mind and body in Aikido. According to the respondents in this study, teaching awareness for the other was

connected in a variety of ways to creating learner opportunities for mindful action. Perhaps, by reclaiming the mind-body rift we can transcend mere understanding of concepts such as harmony, peace and freedom. Rather, movement experiences such as Aikido, that disengage the ego and reunite the mind and body, may allow us to access them directly.

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